

From: DALE ARMSTRONG
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I stumbled across this Chanute Tribune story from Feb. 2 while looking for another story. Here's a copy in case you did not see it.

EPA prepares for refinery cleanup

Project will remove 27 storage tanks, contaminated soil

Kris Knowles

Tribune staff

The Environmental Protection Agency is finally going to finish cleaning up a north Chanute refinery site that is leaking petroleum waste into a stream that feeds the Neosho River.

An EPA contractor is preparing to spend the rest of the year removing contaminated soil, open sludge pits, and 27 large storage tanks.

"They have quite a quantity of material in them. It's pretty labor intensive," said Janice Kroone, EPA's on-site coordinator.

Announcement of the cleanup contradicts statements made a couple weeks ago by a spokesman for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. The spokesman, Don Brown, said the EPA was preparing to do a study of the refinery property, but not a cleanup.

"EPA hadn't made us aware," Brown said Friday.

Kroone would not say how much the cleanup will cost because a contract hasn't been signed with the private company that will oversee the project. But Kroone said the project will be more extensive than a 1994 cleanup at the same site that cost at least \$1.1 million.

The 1994 EPA cleanup removed mercury, drums of flammable and corrosive waste, and asbestos pipe insulation, but the project left behind the storage tanks and open waste pits.



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Kroone said there is now evidence that contaminated water is draining from the site into Village Creek, which feeds the Neosho River, a source of drinking water for Chanute and many other communities.

"I have seen petroleum material discharged from the site," Kroone said. "We consider that a threat to waterways and human health and the environment."

The property is located at the north edge of Chanute, at the corner of Santa Fe and Ash Grove Rd. It was operated as a refinery from 1934 until it closed in 1981.

In advance of the latest cleanup, state officials have patched holes in the fence around the refinery and put up some new sections of fence.

"We found holes where kids and dogs could walk through," Kroone said.

The EPA hasn't decided what to do with oil and sludge that will be removed from the site. Kroone said some of the material may still be useful for making asphalt or fuel.

There is also contaminated water at the site. Kroone said a mobile carbon treatment system will be brought in on several trucks to treat the water. After testing the water may be released.

The cleanup will start in the next few weeks and last 10 months to a year, depending on the weather.

Kroone would not name the company hired to oversee the work, nor would she say how many workers would be involved.

She said crew sizes would vary from week to week. A local motel operator said he has been contacted about the rental of rooms for 15 men.

The project will significantly alter the appearance of the property, which is an eyesore that greets traffic entering Chanute from the north. But Kroone said the cleanup still won't make the property a thing of beauty. The EPA has no plans to remove the site's decaying buildings.

"We're not going to haul the bricks away because that's not our focus, to beautify it," she said.

The 1994 cleanup was paid by the federal Superfund. This year's cleanup will be funded by the U.S. Coast Guard, which pays

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for all petroleum cleanup projects.

"That's the way Congress set up the regulations," Kroone said.

The refinery is owned by investors of a Texas-based trust who purchased the refinery in a 1993 tax sale. The trust refused to pay for the 1994 cleanup and is unlikely to pay for this year's work. Kroone said the EPA has been unable to reach any representatives of the trust for at least a year.

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CC: hattie, diane, dana

